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# THE NEWS LETTER

OF THE COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

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## A Neglected Part Of Literature

Why are English professors so afraid to teach religious literature? We deprive our students of beautiful and enjoyable as well as inspiring masterpieces.

To show the scope and grandeur of English prose, we need some passages from the King James version. Classes nowadays are surprisingly unfamiliar with the Proverbs and the Psalms. The foundation of many best-sellers, Bonaventura's Life of Saint Francis affords charming simple narratives for beginners in composition. Read St. Francis' "Canticle of the Sun" with an alert mind, and you enjoy the most fervent yet all-inclusive praise of worldly blessings — a love of this world's joys commonly attributed only to the "pagan-minded Renaissance". It is a gem of literature that a good Mohammedan or Jew or Confucianist can admire.

We are poor teachers if we can't give our classes enough of the historical point of view to discuss with tolerant understanding the fundamental tenet of the medieval world —the belief in the day of universal judgment. The impassioned eloquence of the "Dies Irae" challenges the literary appreciation of the modern intelligence. In place of Richard Crashaw's or dozens of others, I would suggest Swinburne's translation of that Christian hymn, for the precise reason that the name Swinburne rightly or wrongly represents to the theologically minded the acme of modern paganism, materialism, art-for-art's-sake-ism, eroticism, or whatever extreme unorthodox doctrine or practice of which a writer in his generation could find to be guilty. But see how his version can move you.

If we deprive literature classes of such religious works as the medieval legends and Christian hymns, then sculpture and architecture must ignore the unsurpassed "Last Judgment" of Notre Dame de Paris, Bourges, Chartres, Rheims, etc. And art galleries must hide the Madonnas. There are many great hymns that students are glad to know but unable or unlikely to discover for themselves. From Caedmon through the eighteenth century prosaic poets to the New Englanders, many of the better productions of English speakers have been religious.

Admirers of Dante (and who else is educated?) can use Dante to teach not only morals and imagination, but style and structure, aside from the splendor of medieval Christianity. Or among short masterpieces, take Francis Thompson's "The Hound of Heaven"; analyze and explain it; read it aloud to show its unsurpassed word-music and imagery and design, and don't forget its significance. Then see how highly appreciative your students become. "Veni Creator Spiritus." "Te Deum Laudamus."

—Geraldine P. Dilla,
Univ. of Kansas City.

## After Reading from the Minor Poems of Edmund Spencer

(Who Called Himself "Colin Clout")

*Colin's come home again to cheer my heart:*
*His song is sweeter and more deeply true*
*Than in the days long since, when first his art*
*Fell on us gently, ere to strength we grew.*
*Today, bereft of brighter joys, we do*
*What men must do, withal, in evil days:*
*Grieve for our lonely sons, climb on, and rue*
*Pale years — and yet, tonight, come Colin's lays!*
*His words turn music in their wistful praise;*
*Amid the foul, he lauds each grace again,*
*Singing our only truth in his new phrase,*
*As Chaucer, young Milton, or the border men:*
*For Colin kens, beyond our clouded sight,*
*That "love is Lord of all the world by right."*

—Dackard Ritter, Ohio Wesleyan University

## Legal English

In my opinion the inability of many lawyers to write "clear and unmistakable English" is not due to the use of unnecessary verbiage, obsolete phrasing, and the piling up of synonyms; it is due to the fact that they never learned to use the English language properly before they began the study of law.

In law school the student has considerable experience in expressing his ideas in language, both oral and written, and accuracy more than style is emphasized. However, if the student has not acquired the capacity to use the language effectively by the time he enters law school, he is not likely to overcome this deficiency during the period of his law study.

I believe that legal writings today are much simpler and more direct than they were fifty years ago. The tendency is to get away from unnecessary verbiage and obsolete phrasing, although certain legal expressions appear so frequently in law books that students naturally use them, although there may be simpler ways of expressing the same ideas.

The expression "if these children or any one of them should predecease me" is not uncommon. Of course, it would be just as effective legally to say "if these children or any one of them die before I do." When lawyers tell you that "predecease" is better legal language, they don't mean that it has a different meaning than "die before I do." They merely mean that it is the customary way of expressing the idea. I suppose lawyers, like doctors, engineers, and other professional people, are more or less the victims of habit in their modes of expression.

There is a practical reason why lawyers like to use certain words in preference to others which have the same meaning. If a particular phrase has been interpreted by the courts, the lawyer is certain of the interpretation that will be given the phrase if he makes use of it. If he uses a new phrase, there is always a possibility that a court might interpret it to mean something different from what the lawyer had in mind. By using the phrase which has already been interpreted, he is playing safe. This probably accounts for the reluctance of practicing lawyers to use new phrases in legal instruments, even though they may seem simpler and preferable from the point of view of a student of the English language.

(In writing to you yesterday, I failed to comment upon your statement that you could find no justification in any dictionary for the use of the word "predecease" in the way in which it was used by the lawyer who drew your will.

If you will look in Murray's English Dictionary, you will not only find sanction for your lawyer's use of the word, but you will find that the expression is not wholly a legal one. It was used in the works of many English writers and as far back as the time of Shakespeare.)

—Young B. Smith,
Dean, Columbia School of Law.

"Lord Haldane, the late Secretary of State for War, declared not long ago that few officers in the army were able to write an intelligible dispatch."

—Sir Sidney Lee, "The Place of English Literature in the Modern University," 1913 (in *Elizabethan and Other Essays*, p. 13, 1929.)

### NOTICE

Regional meetings held simultaneously in several cities will take the place of an annual meeting this year. Suggestions as to preferred cities will be welcomed. —Secretary.

## Teachers and Taxes

I have just read with great satisfaction the "Open Letter" to the Secretary of the Treasury, in the August issue of "The News Letter". It is a comfort to know that our Secretary has stated well the case for us, the new "Forgotten Men," even if we may not be sanguine of immediate relief from what is becoming an increasingly difficult situation.

Even before the War many of us had come to realize that we were following our vocation more for love than wages. With proved high I.Q.'s and specialised educations representing an investment of several thousand dollars taken almost literally "out of our skins" at a critical period of life, we were keeping up a kind of front before the world, which could not understand why we could not afford household help for our wives or secretarial aid for ourselves.

If we so desired stability for our families we gave hazardous hostages to fortune by attempting to buy a house, we fretted at paying the plumber and the painter a higher hourly wage than we could earn until we frequently decided to don overalls and perform the tasks ourselves—meanwhile leaving unwritten the articles, the critical essays, or the poems that we, among few, otherwise could have produced in our treasured "marginal time."

Even within our own field we were disadvantageously situated. The large city high school teacher was better paid, had security of tenure, and was sure of provision for retirement. Yes, we have been "temperamentally disinclined to fight for more pay," which alone would seem to make possible the dignity, prestige, and accomplishment which society still, however illogically, seems to expect from us. So much are we 'disinclined' that I wonder that I am exerting myself now even to write this note of appreciation when I might instead be writing, not poetry or scholarship but a home study outline by means of which I hope to eke out a bit the income which, though fair enough as college English teachers' salaries go, is all too meager for my family's moderate needs in time of war, without our contributing as we should like to Bond drives.

I am writing, I think, because I realize and feel that I must say that, disinclined as we may be to recognize it, college teachers are going to be caught very painfully, not only for the "duration" but afterwards too in, or out of, the competition to gain increased payment for work done. I am afraid we cannot passively expect the Government or any other agency to look out for us adequately. Do we lack

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## THE NEWS LETTER

*Editor*
BURGES JOHNSON

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*But words are things, and a small drop of ink,*
*Falling like dew, upon a thought produces*
*That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think.*
*—Don Juan.*

## Editorial

This is one of our pessimistic moments. There lies before us a circular from the U.S. Office of Education hinting at some of the labors of the many committees now planning Education in a Post-War World. There are so many, appointed by so many authorities, that the number of committee members must be legion. One imagines them peering and poking into every educational corner. That innocent-appearing colleague who glanced in at our open door a moment ago in passing, may have paused to make a note about us as soon as he was out of our sight. He has a PLAN for the better utilization of our errant activities in the Post-War World.

Such committees, in the very nature of things, exude optimism; for though their existence implies criticism of the present, it also presupposes a hopeful conspiracy to grasp this sorry scheme of things entire and remould it nearer to the heart's desire. Since our favorite definition of a pessimist is "anyone who has spent two weeks with an optimist" it is easy to see why the consciousness of a myriad snooping optimists should produce editorial gloom.

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There will be no improvement in education — Low, Middle or High, and especially Higher—in that mist-enshrouded Post-War World. Of course there will be hundreds of idealistic plans, each one with its base set solidly upon an Ism, and its pinnacle in the clouds. East will be in training to meet West upon the common ground of Basic English; the Semanticists will be turning the schools into therapeutic agencies for the curing of all bodily as well as mental ills; Technocracy and the Oxford Movement will draw revivifying breaths and go at it again; neo-Tomism and cultu-vorticism will advance from the esoteric to the hysteric. But our established Educational Structure will not be shaken; it has always had space in the cellar and the attic and even in the parlor for these temporary guests. The building is too solidly shored up by Vested Interests.

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By vested interests we do not mean Educational Foundations. We refer to the Course of Study Leading to the Ph.D.; and Summer Courses Leading to Promotion; and Order of Precedence in the Academic Procession; and required and prerequisite courses. We mean printers and photographers and engravers who keep high-school and college annuals alive; and manufacturing jewelers who keep honorary societies alive; and newspapers and alumni who compel overemphasis upon intercollegiate athletics. We mean honorary degrees conferred at the behest of trustees; and trustees created for non-educational reasons; and presidents chosen because they had been parsons; and high-school teachers retained after they reach the age of 100.

We also mean something deeper and closer to ourselves. We mean that particular course in the Catalog entitled "106b: Milton and his Circle. Prerequisites, Eng.1, 22ab, Hist. 10." That is indeed a vested interest, when we remember all that we have spent in precious years and money and toil to learn all that we now know about Milton. No Post-War World shall cheat us of the fruits of that.

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The spirit of prophecy is upon us on this gloomy Monday morning. All the combined horse-power of all of these Committees will not budge the educational structure. All they will do is add a lot of new and strange studies to the curriculum and the most we can do about it is to see that some of them are offered in alternate years.

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Your editor would be grateful for information leading to the discovery of the artist who made the unsigned wood-cut reproduced on the opposite page. Thanks are due him both for the proof, long in our possession, and for his (assumed) permission to reprint.

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Members have recently received a pamphlet report of an inquiry conducted several years ago, under a grant from the Carnegie Foundation, into the Teaching of Written Composition in American Colleges. While occasional orders are still received for these pamphlets, and the conclusions presented in them seem still to be valid, your Secretary felt that the supply on hand would be of greater use if distributed than if stored on office shelves.

## Gleaned From the Mail

Dear Editor:

For a long time I have wanted to drop you a line in appreciation of the "News Letter" that comes to my desk from month to month. The little sheet is invariably full of interesting and significant material and I usually read it from beginning to end, sometimes mark it, and frequently pass it on. In the present campaign over the Humanities you have gathered and presented a surprising amount of wisdom.

Please accept my hearty congratulations both on the idea of such a brief, informal interchange and on the delightful temper and atmosphere that appears to surround it.

(Just before going to press we have word that the writer of this letter prefers not to have his name published because of the impossibility of disassociating it with the organization he represents. Rather than permit the suppression of such worthy sentiments, the editor lets it stand as the anonymous opinion of an obviously discerning person.)

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Dear Editor:

The article entitled "Let's Call a Halt" in August issue by one Dudley Wynn certainly misinterprets my "Chances in War Time" in May 1943 issue. His accusation that I advocate the fallacy of laying before grateful young men about to enter the armed services some "noble thoughts" and "fine maxims". First—"to be dusted off" is altogether a wrong inference from his citations from my article in preceding paragraph. As he quotes me I advocate "an intimate acquaintanceship with and reliance upon the courageous, vitalizing overflow of soul of "great prophets of divinity". Note I don't say a mere acquaintanceship with certain noble "passages" but with the radiating souls through a wide reading of their works of course. I'm not advocating the Pansy, Elsie, or Alger book type, nor even Frank Crane's "unusually moral" stories. I'm not advocating sentimental froth, but I do advocate the knowing intimately, the accepting, assimilating and reacting to great souls, out of whose abundance of heart the mouth speaketh, the wisdom of experience. The impact of personality upon personality—not the verbal heroics of some sentimental wishful thinker is what I advocate. I've written him so and asked him to reread "Literature Can Speak for Itself"; it doesn't need defending nor protecting. This is a powerful dynamic. —Milton Simpson,
Kalamazoo College.

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Dear Editor:

Congratulations on your excellent presentation—in your Open Letter to the Secretary of the Treasury—of the financial plight of college teachers in the face of rising costs of living, increased taxation, and enforced saving.

As a footnote to your statement this situation is illustrative. A year ago an intensive and enthusiastic campaign was conducted in a community to secure the adherence of employees in every institution—commercial, industrial, academic—to the ten percent payroll deduction plan for purchase of war bonds. At last every important organization in the city had "gone over the top"—except the college. Its dependence upon the goodwill and active support of the citizens is so specific that the college administration felt it had no choice except to put pressure upon the teaching staff to reach the same goal. The college earned its "10%" flag, but at what cost in hardship and injustice to its teachers! And the community simply would not have understood or forgiven if we had failed.

(Signature deleted by editor)

## Regional Meeting

A group of C.E.A. members and their associates, from six institutions in central Ohio, met June 17 on the campus of Capital University, Columbus, to discuss the teaching of English to Army and Navy units.

The discussion revealed that wide differences in the various programs force entirely different problems upon instructors in various types of units. With the course provided by the Navy V-12 program, general satisfaction was evident, but teachers in some Army units felt that they had less than enough time to provide any adequate training in the communication of ideas. Others, however, reported that, because they had superior groups of students and considerably more time, they were able to give some attention to the reading of good literature.

An exchange of opinions about textbooks drew some rather sultry comments on hastily devised manuals and anthologies. The academic coordinator of one Army unit suggested that a systematic and objective evaluation of instruction in a considerable number of units might provide valuable data for our work after the war.


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**Writer's Guide and Index to English**
by Porter G. Perrin
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**Principles of Speech**
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190 pages, $1.00

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## Assonance and Slant Rhyme

Mr. Untermeyer, I think, is using assonance in a wide sense, probably trying to get a satisfactory generic term for something which is a matter of great interest to contemporary poets, but for which their own terminology is somewhat unfixed. The terms imperfect rhyme and irregular rhyme are unsatisfactory because they imply error, and ignorance, and poets who are masters of technique use these things deliberately. However, there are distinctions to be drawn, and although Mr. Untermeyer's use is certainly authoritative, I doubt that he would care to be dogmatic about it.

"Assonance" is strictly identity of vowel with difference of consonants in the termination. Southey somewhere says it is a Spanish custom, and gives the example "harlot and parson" (an incongruous pair, which makes the example a mnemonic device). It is used currently for single or double syllable.

For such things as "yellow and billow" writers of my acquaintance use the term "slant rhyme," which I think is satisfactory. They also distinguish "eye rhyme," for words spelled but not pronounced alike; the contrasting term (rarely needed) would be "ear rhyme."

I also personally notice what I call "historical rhyme," for words formerly pronounced alike, but not now. Thus Kirke White was blamed for "boy and sky," though Pope was not. This is akin to "cockney rhyme," where the words are not pronounhed alike in cultured speech but are true rhymes in dialect or inelegant speech. This term of course is unsatisfactory as implying error, and it overlaps historical rhyme.

Finally there is a phenomenon that I should like to call "half rhyme," where certain sounds not exactly alike are accepted as rhyme —the chief instance is the rhyming of final "I" sound with final "E" or "Y"; its acceptance (except by a few purists) is universal in English. Akin to it are two forms now practically confined to the naive and ignorant; acceptance of "M" and "N" as rhyming, and disregard of final "S". Both things are occasionally found in old poets, and are accepted by the unsophisticated. They are not meant to be assonance but true rhyme.

To the English ear "identical rhyme" is too perfect, though the French like it, and it is sometimes successful in our tongue. All these forms (except perhaps some of the half rhymes) are sought by competent poets for special effects, as variety, weirdness, humor, etc.; and are easier to use when there are more than two words on the same rhyme. But current terminology is perhaps chaotic. My classificaton is empirical.

—T. O. Mabbott,
Hunter College.

## From a Scholar Emeritus

Dear Editor:

Weeks ago you wrote me a true 'Belle Lettre'. Since such composition lives through the ages, it commands a quick reply no more than the epistles of Cicero or Sevigne.

Your ambition to do something for "college English requirements" stimulates my Liver (where, as Mediaevals knew, wishes are generated). For the continuity of our intellectual life, no purpose can be more important. Did not Matthew Arnold say that it was for Charm that "God gave the singer his voice"? And in many of the "Best-Sellers" of the past few decades, is not Charm the most deplorable lack? I think that I know why.

Through 500 years our Literature, certainly through Kipling, followed a sort of Apostolic Succession, founded on the Greek and Latin, continued by the Bible and Shakespeare,—an amalgam in instinctive forms of feeling and expression,—which so many of the modern writers know next to nothing about.

The break came when Oxford and Cambridge too much lessened the requirements in the Classics, and when Eliot foisted his proliferating Elective System on KIDS, who had not the experience or wisdom to elect wisely.

That break was no small one. Our inner thoughts on intellectual life and political life stemed from the Classics. Democracy was invented by the Greeks, and they left us a history of Democracy that is more complete than the history of any other form of government. Yet, just when the Mussolinis are damning the Downfall of Democracy, we hide that history from the students in our colleges. Likewise, in mental life, which obviously stems from the classics (as even our Language does), we have bred in the past few decades students of science that do not even know how to give names to their discoveries that are comprehensible to students in other lands. And our most popular writers are often ignorant of the inner associations of our language forms, and so can write only Journalese and Wise-Cracks.

This is all RECENT. The men that made our Constitution,—also those that built the British Empire, —had a different mental training in school and university. (Until Oxford gave a B.A. degree without Latin there was no Communistic Party in England).

Pardon! The net is: I hope the Classics come back among college English requirements."

—William J. Boardman.

P.S. If your college is a member of The English Place-Name Society I advise you to look at their books. Their work is fascinating to Word-Fanciers. It is not only throwing light on historical matters which The A. S. Chronicle treats monkishly, but it has discovered ancient English words and derivations that the N. O. D. didn't know (apparently). It traces from old records the metamorphoais thro which the original larva-pupa word has wriggled, under Saxon, Danish, Norse influences, into the existing Place-Name. For them that like this sort of thing, it is very likable. (Sawston—pron.: Sosen—is all that remains of Tenth Cent. Deisingetune. Horningsea—pron.: Honsi—is the island of one named Hornung, which is Old English for bastard.

—W. J. B.

RESEARCH

## Oral and Written English At Allegheny College

Traditionally, for obvious reasons the Freshman English course has been an omnibus one. The logic of this fact is accepted by those institutions (example: the University of Illinois) which are developing courses in communication.

This logic is also accepted by Allegheny College which practices division of labor in Freshman English. A director of Reading handles remedial reading, and English department staff members conduct the Introduction to Literature course. The Oral and Written English course aims to teach composition as a constructive and even creative process. Form and structure are not neglected, but emphasis is laid upon the development of ideas suggested by voluntary reading.

While the principal aim of the course is to develop as fully as possible the fundamental skills required in the composition of speeches and essays, subordinate aims are to improve students in their reading taste and appreciation, and in mastery of the art of listening.

During the first semester the reading is extensive and broadly cultural. The use of book lists and individual recommendations by library staff members are meant to guide students in their voluntary reading. Reading for the second semester is intensive in the study of such differently organized forms as explanatory, reasoning, interpretative, and persuasive material require.

Besides "Aids to College Study," the course syllabus, and a collegiate dictionary, handbooks of public speaking and English essentials are used, and it is planned to base the course on Robbins' and Oliver's "Developing Ideas Into Essays and Speeches" (first semester), and Blair's "Manual of Reading" (second semester).

The testing program includes: Autobiography, diagnostic English tests; diagnostic speech tests; speech-recording tests; library tests; mass course tests on English essentials.

Speaking assignments include: Getting acquainted speeches; class discussions and oral reports; impromptu and short speeches; major speeches; examination speech.

Writing assignments include: Exercises, sentences, and paragraphs; summaries and outlines; short essays; major papers on books read; term paper.

—Orland M. Ritchie.

### From the Columbus Meeting

Now that I have offered to write a note, to be read to members of C. E. A., concerning the Navy English course as set up here at Miami University, I doubt that I have much of value to offer. I can point out the details of the course as set up here, a course which I indirectly helped to design and therefore approve, since the committee on Navy English took almost bodily the program devised by the committee in charge of Freshman English, of which I am a member. But my commentaries would be largely upon the academic world to which we belong, and they would be bitter: upon the hysterical patriots in the academic world who cannot keep their emotional balance when society needs it, or the self-help patriots who look upon every social disturbance as an opportunity to profit themselves. I might comment upon the plethora of new textbooks, whose appeal lies in the word "American" and a batch of new military-sounding illustrations of the old rules; and of new reading books which seem to assume that all former efforts at teaching literature have been socially futile, and that we must all now proceed to propagandize for a few social ideas. Not that propagandizing for social ideas is against my principles. But it seems unjust and undemocratic to propagandize for ideas without searching examination and criticism of contrary ideas and of society as it actually exists. And can honest criticism be now engaged in? I should also speak against those of my profession who seem to want all life and all judgment to center on one war value only — forgetting that a truly democratic way of living is impossible where man is not roundly developed, is cramped within some special function, idea, or -ism. Most of the boys we will teach look forward, after all, to being valuable citizens of a peaceful (and one hopes a culturally rich and humane) society.

The course we have set up for them tries to meet the Navy requirements of training in reading with understanding and in clear and effective communication both written and oral. The rhetoric we have chosen is one of time-proved usefulness: Foerster and Steadman's "Writing and Thinking," with the exercise book designed to be used with it. The exercise book is added not because of any shortage of useful exercises in the book itself, but because the texts are the property of the Navy and will descend from one to another generation of students, and would gather interlineations as they went; the exercise book will be torn apart and replaced each semester. "Writing and Thinking" will be used through the year, but work in it will be largely concentrated in the first term: grammar, punctuation, sentence correctness, paragraph and theme organization. The book of readings chosen is "The Meaning in Reading," containing essays in such generally valuable fields as How Men Learn, Ways of Living, Problems of Communication, Forms of Communication (not correspondence), People and Places, The American Tradition, War and Science, and the World Tomorrow. This book is also accompanied with a booklet of exercises dealing with meaning, analysis, reading speed, vocabulary, etc. Reading will be dealt with somewhat in the first term, but largely in the second. Liberal use of Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, to be required as a textbook, will continue throughout the year. For work with public speaking we do not have a textbook. If any of you are teachers of speech also, it may seem heresy to say that it has been assumed that with the caliber of student that should be sent to us after the Navy's selective tests, the general principles of correctness and organization and the commonsense of the instructor are counted on as sufficient to deal with oral communication. The exact proportion of written to oral communication during the year has not been decided, but the written will doubtless predominate.

And this, I believe, is all that is really necessary to clarify the Navy V-12 English course as planned. How it will work is yet to learn. It is obvious, though, that the course regards these young men as persons of ability who have futures in society calling for intelligent reading, thought and analysis, and effective and thoughtful expression, and not as mere tools of war to be inspired with propaganda to do an immediate military task without regard to what comes after.

Little, I imagine, need be said about the offerings to be made available to the V-1 and V-7 reserves who will be on the campuses for eight or twelve months yet, permitted to follow their already begun degree work. At Miami, however, the academic curriculum has not been readjusted to meet the sixteen-week terms required by the Navy, and a survey of the Navy reserves was necessary to determine which regular courses should be duplicated in the Navy calendar. On the basis of this survey, it seems that the courses in demand for V-1 and V-7 students will be Advanced Composition, American Literature, Great Writers (seven major writers from Chaucer to Hardy), and Business Correspondence. These courses will be offered in the Navy sixteen week term in substantially the same form as during the regular academic year.

—John Hicks,
Miami University.

### Teachers and Taxes

*(Continued from page 1)*

confidence in the services we are rendering to society? Do we actually perform no great service? Are we archaic in the new world order? We must first make sure of our worth and then say more effectively, "The laborer is worthy of his hire."

There is evidence of course that higher education has always been in part philanthropy. Socrates seems not to have been well paid, or the medieval scholastics. But the teaching of English has come to be recognized as a profession of considerable importance and dignity. It seems to me that now more than ever it is important for members of the profession to do two things: (1) To endeavor to look to the ground they stand on, that is, to improve their techniques of instruction, holding fast to those of proved merit and at the same time being alert to adopt new ones needed, (2) To support their Association and endeavor to maintain the dignity and position of their profession.

Otherwise they and their families will be in very straightened cricumstances, and they will be ill-equipped to make that important contribution to the rehabilitation of a shattered world for which they have special and valuable qualifications .That the best of them will now leave their profession, though probable, is unthinkable.

—Cecil B. Williams
DePaul University

### *English Teachers Wake*

*He enters*
*like a ton of broc*
*in a cornycopia.*
*For such as a slug*
*did amebic sutures*
*swill upon the braes of*
*putneyptnes in farroway*
*Mesoptomania.*
*Shelley comes tomorrow,*
*and tomorrow the sea*
*weed has its whey.*
*Ho!*
*So that's your antiphlogently.*
*Blimey - - -*
*bring on blastering pegsqwik,*
*Fizzling Flugger!*
*Goomps, Wordsy should of*
*blurped the larp in Sadler's*
*Fields.*
*You too Bussy Bruck of*
*the clodden ways in the*
*monoxic yard*
*where pompies grow.*

—John Abbot Clark,
Michigan State College.


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The American Humane Education Society announces its new annual contest for the most outstanding contribution to Humane Education. Open to all educators, the Society will award each year a 14-karat gold key (to be known as the National Humane Key), inscribed on one side with name and date of the winner, and in addition two hundred dollars in War Bonds or cash.

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## On the Casualty List

The war has changed many things, and has begun to liquidate even those stout, solid pillars of society, our light romantic lady novelists.

Time was (in the days of safety) when a plot was a plot, book in, book out, and you knew where you stood. The story lay cozily in the same American town, twelve to twenty-seven thousand, New England, the Middle West, Oregon, it did not matter, one managed these things with a fine universalizing hand. The hero was the town's rising young doctor—or lawyer, or engineer, or architect—but never dentist (dentists, for some melancholy reason, have been the stepchildren of literature; they have never acquired "ton"), or merchant, or real-estate broker, or salesman. Our light romantic lady novelists have a passion for professionals; they scorn trade.

The hero, 35, has a wife, 27, and two children, a boy, 6, and a girl, 4 —or to vary things a girl, 6, and a boy, 4. Once, in a feverish moment, there were twins. Combinations of two boys or two girls never appear; they are against Nature.

In chapter one, man and wife are dancing at the Country Club, divinely happy. In chapter two the first cloud drifts into sight; it is their wedding anniversary and he has forgotten it, no flowers, no jewels; she has of late noticed a growing absentmindedness in him, little wrinkles of worry around his eyes, and other fine touches, such as staying late at the office. Chapter three introduces the Pretty Young Thing, soon to become the third figure in what is rapidly developing into a deliciously unexpected plot. The PYT is just home from an Eastern finishing school, and has not been seen by him since she was "a gangling, freckled girl in pigtails." Now he lays eyes upon her for the first time, as it were, and in his weakened condition, what with business worries, crow's feet, late meals, is smitten by this 'chic', smart, gay apparition. They bump into each other accidentally at the railway station, incredulous recognition on his face, pleasure on hers (she had had a crush on him for years; he was always the handsomest man in town and made all the youths she knew seem callow). They lunch on the spot, and he learns that she is planning a New York career as an advertising writer or a fashion designer. These, it seems, are the only satisfying professions open to women.

Chapter four sees more wrinkles and dinners grown cold. Rumors reach the wife, but she loyally puts them aside. Chapter five pursues his feelings taking shape, making it necessary for chapter six to be devoted to drawing a line between Infatuation and Love. Chapters seven and eight lead to open acknowledgements, he and the girl deciding to go off to New York together, the wife at last aware of the Serious Threat to the Home.

All this is merely preface to the great climax, the climax of chapter nine, the scene the reader has been hungrily anticipating from the start. If a triangle includes two men, the world expects the men to meet and belabor each other with their fists. If the triangle includes two women, as here, the public demands that the women meet vis-à-vis. To dodge this meeting is to indulge in false advertising, be liable to prosecution by the FTC. But the meeting is never dodged; it's there in chapter nine, the wife and her young rival over tea at the Country Club discussing What To Do With Him.

Our heroine, a cool strategist, begins with: "Now that I see you, my dear, I can understand John's attraction! You're very beautiful." They spar during the first cup of tea; by the time the second is poured, the end is already in sight. How can the infatuee resist the children when their mother brings them in, and puts things on a Whom Does He Need Most basis? One or two fierce "ripostes", then a rapid retreat that ends in unconditional surrender, and a note the same day to bewildered he: "It wouldn't work out. I'm off to New York tonight. This is goodbye."

After the terrific percussions of chapter nine, chapter ten is all cooing pianissimo. No more office worries, late dinners, eye creases. On her birthday, bracelets AND flowers. Arms about him, one hand stroking the back of his head, she murmurs inaudibly: "Dear boy, how like a child he is! How I love him!" The End.

There it was, safe, staunch. As I say, you knew where you stood. Even when your favorite lady authors went off to Brazil or Java or somewhere in search of local color (like new upholstery for one's old living room), you recognized, though not without a certain effort of the imagination, to be sure, familiar faces and events breathtakingly nostalgic. There were palmettos, rhumba music, gauchos, rickshas, and Gay Rio or Beautiful Batavia to throw an enchanting veil of novelty over old friends and hallowed sequences. Yet all this exoticism is only a façade for the American Colony; our hero is a mining engineer, our heroine, as ever; only the Pretty Young Thing has altered radically: she is no longer the subdeb fresh from finishing school, but the niece of the mineowner. This, naturally, makes a vast difference. Even so, we can feel our way to the bright, chins-up, head-stroking conclusion with little ultimate difficulty. Brazil is, after all, only Oregon with tropical foliage; Java, Connecticut overrun with sugar cane.

But the war has upended all that! After nearly three years of Selective Service, our hero is in the Medical Corps, performing skillful brain operations in the swamps of New Guinea. Thousands of miles away, back home, our heroine is accepting her ration books like a game trouper—no complaints. She is forced to get along on a major's salary, to be sure, but she has the children, and since there is no direct communication between finishing school and the Solomon Islands, no young rivals to worry about.

Inexorable space has split our trio asunder, and closeted their tale for the duration. More than tennis racquets and golf clubs, more even than meat and butter, we shall miss the literary lemon meringues of our lady romancers. Pleasure driving may be a thing of the flesh, but reading remains of the spirit, and it is easier for the body to fast than the mind.

Let us pray, then, for a speedy end to hostilities and a swift restoration to American fiction of its perennially favorite Blue Plate Specials.

—Leo Gurko, Hunter College.

NOTICE—Copy for the November News Letter should be in the hands of the Editor by October 15. Brief, "meaty" and informal communications are especially desired. New members are invited to introduce themselves to their fellow-members by questions or suggestions inviting correspondence.

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## Looking Backward

*(Criticism of college teaching written sixty-six years ago is of interest today. The following extract from an editorial department in Scribner's Magazine of March, 1877, is called to the attention of fellow members by Miss Geraldine Dilla.)*

Now that the talk is about colleges, may not an outsider express surprise that in one department of study the colleges (with rare exceptions) fail to engage the services of experts. English literature is supposed to be a matter of considerable importance in the intellectual training of young persons; every college has a chair of "belles-lettres," or English literature, or rhetoric, or modern and unclassic literature of some kind,—and yet how many of the colleges in this country have professors in these chairs who know what literature is when they see it?—three or four colleges perhaps—but not many more—so far as the public can be sure of.

There are plenty of men in such positions who have all the dates at their fingers' ends; who have systems, and theories, and what amount of insight and real knowledge the gods may allow. They can publish hand-books of English literature (very bad ones); they can lecture on aesthetics, on literary periods, on the influence of so and so on something or other, or on somebody or other; but in reality they do not know what they are talking about. There are comparatively few people, at best, who DO know what literature is when they see it; generally such people prove their insight and ability either by writing criticisms on literature (like Sainte-Beuve), or by making literature (like Longfellow), or both (like Lowell). . . . . .

We were talking the other day, to a college president, on this subject, and while his views were, in the main, in accordance with those here given, he presented certain explanations of, and apologies for, the present system. "What you are talking about," he said, "is genius, and genius is hard to find." In reply to this, it was easy to mention the familiar names of at least a few American men of letters who have proved their possession of more genius, let us say, than the majority of the professors of literature in American colleges. The reputations of some of these writers may not have increased greatly during the last decade or two,—may not have increased as much as might have been the case, perhaps, had they been placed, long ago, on regular salaries, in respectable institutions, with the temptation to prose or poetic hack-work — fortunately for themselves and the community — removed. "Besides," said the president, "if we try to secure the services of such men early in their careers, we run more than ordinary risk of moral disaster; genius is apt to be hot-blooded!" Assuming if you will that the risk is greater in such a case, we see no way for it but to run such a risk as, some time ago, Harvard ran, with a young man by the name of Longfellow; and later, with another young man by the name of Lowell. And, moreover, is there nothing to be said as to the steadying effect of a dignified professional position? "Again," said the good-natured president, "these chairs are almost invariably given for life, i. e., during good behaviour; and vacancies are of rare occurrence." But if we take this to be a very insufficient explanation.

We can conceive of but one motive which is likely to counteract the present system, namely, the competition which has lately shown itself in a rage for buildings,—as well as in a nobler rage for higher scholarship,—and which may, not unlikely, take the form of a competition for "literary stars." Such a motive is not the noblest,—but MEN are sure to prove of more force than bricks and mortar, no matter how important bricks and mortar may be when conveniently and imaginatively displayed.

## Testimony For the Defense

If plans for post-war reconstruction in education reveal a tendency to neglect the literary studies, we teachers of English must take our share of the blame. There is little agreement among us as to our function. Content to assert the value of the subject, with only the most mystical attempts to demonstrate its relation to modern personal and social needs, we have faced too complacently a situation in which our subject-matter has been popularly regarded as an escape, a genteel diversion, or a prestige-winning device. Lest confusion in our own ranks lend comfort to our detractors, there is need for a close scrutiny of the apologetics of literary study, including the problems of methodology and the investigations of sources to which we devote so much of our time. There are many justifications for our work, but two extremely important ones, while commonplace enough in the profession, are rarely transmitted to college students.

One of these is the justification of literature as an interpretation of life. True, this frequently bogs down in attention to "backgrounds" for which there is little corresponding "foreground" in the form of specific literary works to be studied directly. Badly used, it leads to anything from a search for morals to a debate on psychology or philosophy. Rightly focused on the literature at hand, however, the theory of literature as an interpretation of life contributes fruitfully to the integration of learning in all fields, while overlapping none. To form in a student the habit of seeking and comparing the interpretations of the masters is to give him a basic tool for self-cultivation and to aid him in his first step toward intellectual maturity.

Another justification, frequently but badly used, asserts the value of aesthetic experience itself. The idea that there is nothing in the world quite so unique and original as a good poem, and that every good poem offers an opportunity for an absolutely new experience rarely dawns upon our students. Furthermore, in a society like ours, which worships a rational "scientific" ideal, the dictates of mental hygiene require that some energy be diverted into channels where emotional experience has value in and for itself.

If, despite these reasons, the contemplative enjoyment which constitutes genuine aesthetic experience still seems a pale negation, there is yet a third defense of artistic experience. A true art-loving people can objectify emotions rather than become victimized by them. The emotions become stimuli to personal and social enrichment rather than the tools of propagandists and advertisers. Through the arts we become truly free.

By exemplifying doctrines like these, by eschewing the mystical attitudes and poses which have so long constituted the defense of the arts, by accepting the challenge of science and technology to "talk sense," we can demonstrate that the study of literature has functional value in modern society.

—Roland Crozier Burton
State Teachers College
Oswego, New York

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